

# Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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## Editorial

### The Comforter

In its early history the gospel was rightfully regarded as a divine agency of comfort to the world-weary, the oppressed, the heart-sick and heart-broken among the unfortunate sons of Adam. There were multitudes of these in the old days when the common people were practically slaves the world over, and victims of every robber and tyrant whom circumstances clothed with power and furnished with opportunity to oppress the poor and defenceless. For them there was little outlook in this world. Material comforts were beyond even their dreams. In times of peace they tilled the soil for the lord of the neighboring castle, or did his menial service, or filled his harem. In times of war, which was nearly all the time, they furnished the victims for the slaughter. It was a dreary pilgrimage for the common people in those days, thru slavery to slaughter. A father could not count his sons or his daughters his own. "The dark places of the earth were full of the habitations of cruelty." And all the habitations of men, for thousands of years, were shrouded in the midnight gloom of barbaric brutality. No wonder that when the gospel of "peace on earth and good will among men" was first preached by lips that spake as none ever spake before, the common people heard him gladly. Here was comfort indeed, a great light of deliverance, an unspeakable joy that no oppression could take away. In the certain hope of an eternal salvation, eternal life; in the comforting embrace of an infinite love, what mattered the "light afflictions" of this world? What mattered if they were robbed? Yea, they were now able to take the spoiling of their goods joyfully. What mattered if they were slain? Yea, death was the home going, the crown and the glory. What mattered if they were denied this world? It was a great exchange to receive the heavenly. Why has it come to pass that this abounding comfort of the gospel seems no longer to be the general experience of Christians? Is it because we have in these last days come into the possession of so many material comforts? We have such good houses, such good clothes, such good food, such undisturbed peace, such secure liberty, such abounding prosperity on the right hand and on the left, that we no longer feel the need of the "Comforter." We are already

comforted. The world has become a good place to live in, these last years, so fascinating indeed, that if it were left to us, we might elect to remain here forever, spite of heaven itself. Is this our love of the world? Is it well?

### Contracting for Souls

A new thing under the sun, despite the wisdom of Solomon, is this twentieth century contract of the Methodist leaders for the conversion of two millions souls during the coming year. The plan is to enlist 200,000 workers, each pledged to bring ten souls into the church. A general committee multiplies its instrumentality by a great number of local committees, until the army of workers are all enlisted, and then the pulling and hauling is to begin. If souls can thus be machined into the church, why should the limit be left at two millions? Why not organize for the immediate conversion of the whole world? If mathematics is to rescue a languishing gospel from comparative defeat, let more ciphers be added. This substitution of the arithmetic for the grace of God is the very newest idea in modern evangelism, and the Christian world will look on with great interest to see how it is going to work out. The great denomination which is trying the experiment got no comfort from figures in its last conference report. They showed no numerical gains for a whole year. Will a committee cipher out a better balance sheet for the ensuing year? Will a "whereas" and a "resolved" open the sluices of salvation to two millions of perishing souls? We shall see. Meanwhile we will hold in view the old fashioned idea of a consecrated, unworldly church, filled with the Holy Ghost, and carrying, as a deep channel, the river of life, the waters of salvation, to a thirsty world. The shrewd old world loves to be worldly, but it has no respect for a worldly church; and when such a church loses at the same time the tenancy of the Holy Spirit and the respect of the world, what becomes of its spiritual power? What influence can it have for the conversion of souls? Denominational pride, and the boast of numbers, is not likely to find a salve for its humiliation in committees and contracts. Let our Methodist brethren, and for that matter let all the rest, including ourselves, try the magic of the "old-time religion," and there will come back to the world the wonderful fruitfulness of the old-time evangel.